

## HR Corner

### Focused strategies tackle labour challenge

by Alex Lai



Vida Chow, director  
of human resources  
Grand Hyatt Hong  
Kong  
Photo: Wallace Chan

#### Grand hotel accommodates best practice to achieve 100% employee satisfaction

Rapid developments of Macau's leisure industry and the increasing number of hotels in Hong Kong are creating an assortment of employment opportunities for talented and experienced professionals in hospitality, putting unprecedented stress on Hong Kong's labour market. As such, many employers are pulling out all the stops to recruit the best talent the market has to offer, while as many develop a keener focus on retaining high-performing employees.

Earlier in July, Hyatt International Asia Pacific held a human resources meeting calling upon human resource employees across the region to focus on employee retention policies.

According to Vida Chow, director of human resources, Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, the pool of hotel talent is shrinking so the meeting's aim was to devise and implement incentive policies aimed at retaining talented employees. "We

are now concerned with the specifics of every single element of employee retention and our human resources specialists are driving towards the goal of minimising employee turnover," Ms Chow says.

#### Effective tools

The meeting has helped generate a list of tactics and strategies to ensure every hotel is clearly focused on efficiently retaining high potential employees. These include promotion opportunities and lateral professional movement.

**"Strengthening our human resources  
is key to our success"**

"We identify employees who are not only exceptional performers in their respective areas, but also capable of meeting leadership potential," Ms Chow stresses. "In return we ensure recognition and celebration of their contributions and offer them opportunities to upgrade their responsibilities."

Thus, the establishment of a training academy provides an opportunity for employees at management level to build on their strengths. "We encourage employees to share outside interests, individual goals and personal growth ideas, thereby giving them the opportunity to experience and learn new concepts, which are both personally and professionally beneficial," she adds.

The academy provides potential management employees with auxiliary networking opportunities and skills. "As a flagship hotel, we offer tremendous support to employees, particularly when new Hyatt hotels are opened. For instance, we have chosen a team of talented managers to assist in the opening of Hyatt on the Bund in Shanghai," Ms Chow states, adding that she felt personally honoured upon selection as a hotel pre-opening team member in Trinidad in July, residing in the Caribbean for six weeks.

Yet, it boils down to effective leadership for the overall retention strategy. She says, "Our two-day leadership induction programme runs two to three times a year involving interactive role-play which aims to achieve team synergy while also improving individual competencies."

## Care for employees

Aside from networking opportunities, travel options and employee academies help with overall career development and financial incentives are also essential to ensure talented employees remain positive and productive. "Regarding benefits, we consider our employee packages very competitive in the marketplace. Incentives are linked to overall hotel revenue and employees in particular sectors, for example spa therapists, are encouraged to increase productivity in addition to receiving a cash reward linked to hotel profit."

A range of other employee benefits are in the pipeline to ensure continuous employee satisfaction. "People want to feel associated so we are offering social activities designed to encourage team work and bonding," Ms Chow notes.

To better understand employees' needs, two-way communication is imperative and crucial to drafting retention strategies. She highlights the importance of the long-established "Hyattalk" as a useful communication channel among employees.

Work environment also plays a part. "Our administrative office offers a panoramic view of the harbour, which is an asset employees enjoy," Ms Chow notes, stressing that the addition of beds in the resting room has received positive feedback. "We want employees to stay as healthy as possible."

The hotel recorded a 16 per cent employee turnover rate last year and it has decreased over the past few years. "Strengthening our human resources is key to our success, so we will remain as open-minded and willing to listen as ever," Ms Chow concludes.

## Salient points

- Focused management meeting delves into key human resources issues
- Two-way communication imperative to drafting retention strategies
- Training academy boosts career prospects for management employees
- Employee benefits ensure continuous employee satisfaction

Taken from *Career Times* 22 February 2008, p. D8

Your comments are welcome at [editor@careertimes.com.hk](mailto:editor@careertimes.com.hk)